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Change is in the Bag! Campaign Cleans up Cyprus, One Bag at a Time



Plastic bags have become an ever-present blot on the Cypriot landscape—stuck on fences, strewn across beaches, blowing

across fields, clogging storm drains and hurting wildlife. In an attempt to tackle this problem, the SAVE project is teaming up with local business and community leaders to raise public awareness about the health and environmental dangers posed by the continued and unnecessary overuse of plastic bags. The goal of the **“Change is in the Bag”** campaign is to challenge everyone living on the island to reduce their use of plastic bags. The message will also be reinforced through an outreach campaign to the media, environmental organizations and schools. Everyone can contribute to keeping Cyprus beautiful by making a conscious effort to use bags only when necessary and to use reusable bags whenever possible.



◀ *Signs in participating stores will ask consumers to stop and think—
“Do I really need a bag?”*



Cypriot Leaders Lend Unprecedented Support to USAID-Funded Joint Initiative

In the presence of President Demetris Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat, the Presidents of the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce signed an agreement to implement a USAID-funded project aimed at nurturing economic interdependence between the two communities on March 17 in the UN-patrolled Buffer Zone in Nicosia. Building on the results of several previous USAID-funded initiatives, the “Interdependence” project is designed to promote the economic interaction and integration that are essential underpinnings to any lasting peace. The event was attended by business leaders from both sides of the dividing Green Line and received widespread coverage in the press. In the words of **Cyprus Mail** journalist, Simon Bahceli, “For the two community leaders to attend such a ceremony and give their joint backing to a cause is unprecedented in modern Cypriot history.” The event emphasized the mutually reinforcing roles to be played by the business community and the political leadership in ensuring economic convergence and sustainable economic development on the island.

The mission of USAID/Cyprus is to encourage cooperation between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot individuals and organizations to reduce tensions and promote a climate that will foster reconciliation and a durable peace settlement.

Economic Development and Growth for Enterprises

EDGE facilitated the eighteenth “Commerce Roundtable” between the presidents of the chambers of commerce and industry from both sides. The group analyzed the latest trends in trade across the Green Line, addressed several issues continuing to hamper increased trade, and agreed on action items to be pursued before the next meeting in early May. EDGE also organized a workshop on international best practices in the development of programs and services for more than twenty participants from different Cypriot business associations. Part of a series of workshops in the area of business development services, this event highlighted ways to develop demand-driven programs and services that build both organizational capacity and member loyalty.

Supporting Activities that Value the Environment

On March 16, SAVE organized a briefing on water issues for USAID Rep Alan Davis. Senior TC water managers outlined the progress they have made in water modeling, well management, water quality monitoring, and related issues thanks to SAVE’s support and USAID-funded training. The group also discussed current and future priorities. SAVE continued its training activities in the area of alternative solid waste management. In addition to follow up sessions with the Agricultural Extension Service interns, SAVE worked with the new-to-Cyprus Capacity Building Project funded by the EU. Beyond sharing lessons learned from SAVE’s pilot projects, the goal is to ensure transition to future related activities to be funded through EU programs.

Action for Cooperation and Trust

ACT is in the process of designing a new initiative that builds on years of ACT’s multicultural and bicomunal cooperation work. The new initiative, “Diversity and Multiculturalism in the Workplace,” aims to build the capacity of different service providers to work effectively in a multicultural and diverse environment in Cyprus. As the first step in the new initiative, ACT produced a report that summarizes and analyzes ACT’s activities and the roles of other stakeholders in the context of the ongoing political situation in Cyprus. The report serves as a basis to identify and map the most relevant public service providers and prioritize them for the ensuing capacity assessment.

Resource Efficiency Achievement Project

REAP held a reception to celebrate the project’s accomplishments over its three and half-year lifespan. Thanks to REAP’s efforts, consumers are now demanding more energy efficiency information and appliances. In addition, elective and continuing education courses in energy efficiency are now an integral part of the curriculum of several mechanical and electrical engineering programs. REAP also led to the establishment of an active energy professionals association, which will help energy service companies liaise with decision makers and encourage energy efficiency reforms and energy efficient habits community wide. Initiated in 2005 and implemented by CORE International, REAP has made significant improvements to the Turkish Cypriot community’s efficient use of energy and water and has improved the competitiveness, financial status, and service quality of small and medium-sized enterprises.

As part of his official visit to the coastal city of Larnaca on March 16th, U.S. Ambassador Urbancic visited the Hala Sultan Tekke mosque with USAID Representative Alan Davis and Political Chief Greg Macris. While the site itself is a symbol of Cyprus' multicultural past, the project is an example of a USAID initiative to support the efforts of one community to protect a site of religious and cultural significance to the other.



News from Nicosia

March 24

President Demetris Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat met and continued to discuss “EU Matters.” The last meeting on this topic will take place April 2 and then discussions will move on to “Economy” issues.

OUR PROJECTS

- The **Action for Cooperation and Trust (ACT)** program mainstreams the concepts of conflict resolution in over 120 projects that encourage Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots to work on issues of common concern and solve problems together. Projects are currently underway in the areas of youth, education and tolerance, civil society strengthening, sustainable development and cultural heritage preservation. ACT is funded through a cooperative agreement between USAID and the UN Development Program (UNDP).
- The **Cyprus Partnership for Economic Growth (CyPEG)** includes activities that support economic growth in the Turkish Cypriot community to decrease the disparities between the communities and promote reconciliation. CyPEG is implemented by U.S. contractors under different USAID contract mechanisms.
 - The objective of the **Economic Development and Growth for Enterprises (EDGE)** project is to strengthen the domestic and international competitiveness of Turkish-Cypriot small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and help restructure the financial sector so that SMEs can thrive.
 - The **Resource Efficiency Achievement Program (REAP)** promotes more efficient use of water and energy by conducting audits and upgrades of representative business establishments and households. REAP also provides technical assistance to Turkish Cypriot energy experts.
 - The **Supporting Activities that Value the Environment (SAVE)** project focuses on improving (1) the competitiveness, financial status, and quality of basic services and infrastructure to more easily meet international and EU standards and (2) Turkish Cypriot capacity to manage natural and cultural resources for economic growth.
 - The **Capacity Development and Training Project (CDP)** complements other USG-funded programs in Cyprus by providing capacity development and training in critical areas.